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ABSTRACT

Students have changed since 1815, when they were expected to reiterate what they learned in the classroom and were discouraged from having ideas of their own. Today's student is seriously concerned about his education and how it will prepare him for the future; he is no longer just a spectator at a lecture, and knows that education is not restricted to the classroom. The College Union, which early advocated education outside the classroom, is currently becoming one of the most important teaching stations in the university, and it is essential that the Union stay abreast of changing student needs. Yet, at this time of need for new Union buildings or renovations of old ones, higher education is facing a financial crisis and money is short everywhere. In planning for a new or renovated Union the following principles should be considered: (1) the need of a good planning team that includes student, faculty, and administrative representatives; (2) a study of the campus environment; (3) the development of a program; and (4) the design of a facility that fits the environment and is designed for function, change, flexibility, education, and economy of operation. (AF)

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SESSION 12: STUDENT LIFE STYLES AND THEIR IMPACT ON COLLEGE UNION PLANNING

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Let me take you to the year 1815 in Cambridge, England. Students at that time were expected to reiterate that which they learned in the classroom and were discouraged from having ideas of their own. They were not, for example, permitted to debate social or political issues of the day. Some students in protest refused to wear their wigs to the formal school debates. Others, showing a stronger protest, cut their hair short. One small group of young men began meeting in the back rooms of the Red Lion Inn and formed a society known as the "Cambridge Union Debating Society." They chose the word "Union" because they felt that by bringing together students with an opportunity for free debate, they might bring about a unity among the student body, and perhaps a better understanding of each other as they examined individual differences. This idea spread to Oxford and by 1823, the function of the Union Debating Society brought about a need for facilities. A library seemed important, a place to meet together for informal discussions and dinner before debates, and perhaps some facilities where the membership could meet together for informal recreation might be important. But the group of men founding this first Union were sensitive to the importance of interior design. They commissioned Benjamin Woodward, a foremost architect of the day to design a facility which would be conducive to things cultural and intellectual. They commissioned Dante Rossetti and other Raphaelites to design frescoes for the walls. As the Union

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concept movement moved from this English setting to the United States in the late 1800's, the basic philosophy remained unchanged. However, relating to the college student in the late 1800's, the debating function changed to social functions usually found in a gentleman's club at that time. College Unions in the 1939's reflected the need of our society, in midst of a depression, to meet together and identify with large groups. It was the time for large parties, dances, and theatre productions. The World War II years found the College Union as a campus USO center. The number of College Unions in the United States today is about 1200. There are over 400 International Unions in countries such as Japan, Pakistan, China, England, Finland and Australia. There have been some reports of unions behind the iron curtain in Yugoslavia. Two-thirds of these unions have been built since World War II, and many of the older unions have had up to six additions.

Not only does the College Union continue to grow, but it also continues to respond to the changing needs of its society, and yet at the same time continues to satisfy its basic philosophy as a place where all members of the university family meet and identify with each other.

Life styles of students are never static. However, the speed of the pendulum regulating changes has increased and our task this morning is to examine the effect of this change on "Planning the College Union" for this decade.

Students today have lived through electronics and other technological advancement which makes them a part of the world scene immediately, and provides computerized answers to complex problems in seconds. The space program teaches them that nothing is impossible, providing there is commitment of human and financial resources. As a result, they are "Now" people and they want to see change happen quickly. Their life experience tells them that change is necessary if one is to keep relevant.

The college generation is concerned about the individual in our society. Students are concerned that as we grow in population and live closer together, we will lose a personal identity. Today's student

is concerned about his environment and what we have done to it as we grew technologically. He is worried about how we will feed ourselves if our rate of population growth continues. Today's student is seriously concerned about his education and how it will prepare him for his future. The days of the university "in loco parentis" philosophy are past. College students seek self-determination in where they live, in developing their sexual morés, in establishing their value structures, and in building a curriculum. Students no longer are spectators at a lecture, nor do they study only in the library or in their room. The involved student, as a part of his educational process, feels that learning about life and community responsibilities is as important to him during his educational years as the formal instruction which he receives in the classroom. I believe that today education must look to the broader campus and community environment for teaching stations, and should not restrict teaching to the traditional classroom. The College Union, which early advocated education outside the classroom, is currently becoming one of the most important teaching stations in the university. Students tend to identify today with smaller special interest groups rather than the large school events. Dances are giving way to concerts where the individual can have his own experience as he listens - even athletics are coming up for criticism.

Another important dimension effecting the design of the College Union is the economy of 1971. Inflation has caused state governments, individuals, and corporations to examine priorities as they allocate money to education. Campus unrest last year caused people to ask for more accountability from students and educators, and to underline this, private schools raised tuitions and state legislatures are asking students to pay a higher percentage of their education. The College Union is almost exclusively financed by student fees to pay for the cost of the building. Operating departments (food, recreation, etc.) are generally expected to break even - a feat most difficult in the present economy. All of this at a time when we find many of the established College Union

buildings in need of repair and renovation, as well as additional space needs to meet rising enrollments. Junior colleges and new campuses usually look to the College Union as one of the first priorities on the campus.

Let me take these rather generalized statements about students and education and talk about some planning principles which I consider important for new buildings or renovation. There is no one package of plans which will work for every College Union. These suggestions are by no means conclusive. I would hope that they will raise questions during the discussion session later.

Design on the Basis of Good Planning

Start with a good planning team, study campus environment, develop a program, then design a facility to fit the environment.

A good team might be:

1. Chairman - a strong faculty/administrator
2. Architect
3. Interior Designer
4. Union Director
5. Faculty Representative
6. Governing Board Representative
7. Business Office Representative
8. Students - 4 to 6

Each member brings to this committee particular expertise. By meeting together to solve problems, a good planning team educates each other and each developes a commitment to the total. Be sure that students are <u>really</u> involved. Seek representatives from all life styles including black students, International students, and so called "freaks." They will know what they want from a union -

and remember, the students pay the bill - others on the committee can help translate this into design and operation.

Design for Function

I believe that good design should start with function. Architects and interior designers should resist a personal ego trip and apply their talents to designing a building which satisfies functional need, is aesthetically educational, and one which the university can afford to maintain over the years. Administrators should be careful not to design a facility based on what they think students should have.

Design for Change

For years universities have designed monuments which last too long. Systems buildings or other innovative construction techniques should be employed so that facilities can be constructed in less time, cost less per square foot, and be renovated at minimal cost. Interior design should be planned for obsolescence so that after a period of time a new environment can be created. Food service equipment, one of the most expensive elements of a College Union, should be analyzed and related to convenience foods and vending - all of this should be related to good design.

Design for Flexibility

Most space in the College Union should be designed so that it has multipurpose use. A 650-seat cafeteria, for example, used only 6 hours a day is not efficient use for a $200,000 to $250,000 construction cost. Good multipurpose space requires careful planning so that it can be utilized economically. Some space will need to be open 24 hours a day. Students study late, eat late, work in offices, play cards, talk all night, and play pool at 1:00 a.m. Design a building which can be zoned for different hours of operation.

Design for Education

The reason for being on a college campus is education. Be sure that the building and interior design has integrity so that it becomes educational as students use it. Provide for art galleries, listening rooms, browsing-vending rooms, and spaces which can readily be available for public debates or lectures - too often I see these educational spaces omitted because they do not produce income. But, remember, the more educational programs, the more people use the building, the more people there are to provide income for service departments, and the easier to justify the cost of a building.

Design for Economy of Operation

All design of the College Union must be related to economy of operation. A typical Union is designed for maximum students who, in effect, use the facility to its maximum potential only 8 1/2 months of the year. With the current budget "crunch" felt by higher education, College Unions are being asked to assume the indirect costs of land, utilities, general administrative support, etc. Food cost systems, management techniques, and personnel requirements must be a part of the planning process.

I see the entire planning process as one of proper communication and coordination between students, administrators, architects, consultants, and faculty. If the communication is good, I submit that the building will be relevant for today's life styles.